

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8927

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 0829

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJ: SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE ELECTIONS REPORTEDLY
POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

REF: PHNOM PENH 408

1. SUMMARY: THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE ELECTIONS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN POSTPONED INDEFINITELY. INSTEAD, A FIVE-MAN POLITICAL BUREAU HAS BEEN FORMED WHICH INCLUDES LON NON AS A MINORITY MEMBER. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS ARRANGMENT WILL SATISFY LON NON AND CONTROL HIS ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. LONG BOTTA, A MEMBER OF THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 15 THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ELECTIONS HAVE NOW BEEN POSTPONED "SINE DIE" BY ORDER OF THE MARSHAL. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT LON NON PLANNED TO BECOME PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL THROUGH THESE ELECTIONS. HE WANTED THEM TO BE HELD IN LATE DECEMBER SO THAT HIS POSITION IN THE PARTY AND ACCOMPANYING POLITICAL CLOUD WOULD BE CONSOLIDATED BEFORE THE UPCOMING CABINET RESHUFFLE. THE MARSHAL, HOWEVER, INTERVENED TO MOVE THE ELECTIONS BACK TO THE DATE ORIGINALLY SET FOR JANUARY 19. THERE HAS BEEN AT LEAST ONE PRESS REPORT (REFTEL) OF FURTHER POSTPONEMENTS.

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3. THE MARSHAL'S LATEST DECISION TO OPOSTPONE THE ELECTIONS INDEFINITELY IS, THEREFORE, ANOTHER BLOW TO HIS YOUNGER BROTHER'S AMBITIONS. BOTTA COMMENTED THAT HIS GROUP ON THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (LED BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER HANG THUN HAK AND 1ST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL PAN SOTHI) WANTED TO AVOID A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS RUPTURE WITH LON NON AND HIS GROUP WITHIN THE PARTY. ACCORDINGLY, A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS HELD WITH NON PRESENT. AFTER LONG AND OFTEN HEATED DISCUSSION, THE DECISION WAS TAKEN TO FORM A POLITICAL BUREAU. (THIS HAS BEEN REPORTED BY THE LOCAL PRESS .) THE BUREAU WILL SERVE ASIA PARTIAL SUBSTITUTE FOR THE ELECTIONS. IT HAS FIVE MEMBERS; LON NON IS ONE OF THE MEMBERS, BUT HE IS SOLIDLY OUT-VOTED BY THE OTHER FOUR (HAK, SOTHI, BOTTA AND UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONCORD KEAM RETH) WHO ARE ALLIES AND WHO OPPOSE NON'S SCHEMES FOR TAKING CONTROL OF THE PARTY.

4. BOTTA SAID THAT THE NEW POLITICAL BUREAU IS A COMPROMISE, DESIGNED TO SAVE SOME FACE FOR LON NON. IT IS ALSO DESIGNED TO CONTROL HIM AND PREVENT HIM FROM GOING OFF ON HIS OWN HOOK WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH OTHER PARTY MEMBERS. HOPEFULLY, HIS MEMBERSHIP ON THE BUREAU WILL MODERATE HIS ACTIVITIES SINCE THE FIVE MEMBERS ARE SUPPOSED TO ACT AS A GROUP, AND NOT AS INDIVIDUALS.

5. COMMENT: BOTTA'S INFORMATION IN THE PAST HAS BEEN ACCURATE AND WE TEND TO BELIEVE THAT THE ELECTIONS HAVE, IN FACT, BEEN POSTPONED. ONE OTHER, LESS WELL-PLACED PARTY SOURCE PROFESSED IGNORANCE OF THE DECISION, HOWEVER. THE ARRANGEMENT BOTTA DESCRIBES SEEMS TO BE A GOOD ONE. IF ADHERED TO, IT COULD MINIMIZE THE DAMAGING AND FUTILE POLITICAL IN-FIGHTING THAT LON NON SO EASILY PROVOKES. WHETHER THE VOLATILE "PETIT FRERE" WILL ALLOW HIMSELF TO BE REINED IN BY THE POLITICAL BUREAU, HOWEVER, IS AN OPEN QUESTION.
DEAN

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